

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 25, 2019

Agenda Item: Thompson-Fisher Conservation Easement Amendment

Division: Wildlife **Action Needed:** Final Action

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background

FWP proposes to remove 1.63 acres of developed land from the Thompson-Fisher Conservation Easement (CE) and replace it with 5 acres of undeveloped, upland and riparian habitat along the Little Thompson River (Figures 1 and 2). This proposed CE amendment would resolve encroachment issues on the CE land. These encroachments are associated with Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) cabin lease sites adjacent to the CE on seven different parcels of State School Trust Land. The building encroachments include various structures or other improvements. Weyerhaeuser has agreed to remove the 1.63 acres of developed land from the easement and add 5 acres of undeveloped land that is adjacent to existing CE land, for a net gain to the easement property of approximately 3.37 acres. The 5-acre parcel to be added to the CE is currently managed by Weyerhaeuser as forestland and this proposal would ensure the parcel would be conserved and managed according to terms in the CE. No money would be exchanged to complete the proposed amendment.

Public Involvement Process & Results

FWP released a draft environmental assessment (EA) for public review on Feb. 12, 2019, and asked for public comment through March 15, 2019. FWP ran legal ads describing the proposed project, the availability of the draft EA, and the public hearing information in three local newspapers. The draft EA was posted on FWP's official website and was also available at the Region 1 headquarters in Kalispell and online. FWP received four comments and addressed the one issue raised in the decision notice.

Alternatives and Analysis

The EA evaluated the potential impacts of the following alternatives: 1) **Alternative A: No Action** – Under the No Action alternative, the developed land would remain in the CE and no additional acreage would become part of the easement area. 2) **Alternative B: Proposed Action** – Under the Proposed Action alternative, the Thompson Fisher CE would be amended to remove 1.63 acres of developed land and replace it with 5 acres of undeveloped, riparian and upland habitat along the Little Thompson River.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends the commission approve amending the Thompson-Fisher Conservation Easement to address the encroachment issue on the easement property which would successfully resolve the issue for all parties involved, Weyerhaeuser, DNRC, and FWP.

Proposed Motion

I move the commission approve the amendment of the Thompson-Fisher Conservation Easement as proposed by FWP.